Indian and Northern Affairs Canada / Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

NWT Plain Talk

On Land and Self-government

Spring 2003

Threads of History

Gwich'in seamstresses bring ancient craft to life

It took three years and 40 skilled seamstresses to bring back a part of Gwich'in heritage that hasn't been seen in Gwich'in communities for over a century. In March, five replicas of a traditional Gwich'in men's summer caribou outfit were unveiled at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. The Gwich'in Cultural and Social Institute partnered with the Heritage Centre to begin the Gwich'in Traditional Clothing Project in 1999 to revive interest in an ancient craft. Their work is a reminder of the ingenuity, patience and skill of the Gwich'in people who have always used the raw materials of the land. Modelled after an original outfit preserved in the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, the seamstresses created one outfit for display in each of the Gwich'in communities and at the museum in Yellowknife. Each is a work of striking beauty and impressive functionality. Sinew, porcupine quills, trade beads, silverberry seeds, and the red stain of ochre embellish the clothing in intricate patterns.

A time to celebrate and to look forward

Making history in the NWT

Progress on land and self-government negotiations is usually measured not in weeks or months, but years. The issues are often complex and it can take many, many discussions to come to agreement on just one point. This is why each milestone along the path to a final agreement is an achievement to be recognized and celebrated.

Recently, there was cause for such celebration on two occasions in the NWT. The Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Robert D. Nault, joined with Aboriginal and territorial leaders to celebrate the signing of the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle for the Beaufort-Delta Region and the Deh Cho First Nations Interim Resource Development Agreement.

Both events were marked by solemnity and celebration, not only because they were the culmination of many hours of negotiations, but also because they bring the parties involved one step closer to a final agreement.

"Self-government will return decision-making to the Beaufort-Delta Region. The Gwich'in, the Inuvialuit, and other Beaufort-Delta residents, will be able to draw from the past while looking toward the future," said Fred Carmichael, President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

Even as they celebrated their achievement, many of the people involved in these two ceremonies were already talking about the future and focusing on the road ahead.

"This year will also mark our move into phase two, the actual start of negotiations toward an Agreement-in-Principle and a Final Agreement. In the vision of our ancestors, we will continue to walk the path of governments, the journey of trust and mutual respect of negotiations," said the Grand Chief of the Deh Cho First Nations, Michael Nadli.

In fact, no one is content to rest on the success of these agreements. The next phase of negotiations has already begun at both negotiating tables, with ambitious schedules in place for the coming year.

In the Beaufort-Delta Region, the Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, Canada and the Government of the NWT are now focusing on building a final self-government agreement from the foundation of the Agreement-in-Principle. In the Deh Cho negotiations will now focus on reaching a "general Agreement-in-Principle" in the next 12 months. This agreement will lay out the parameters for the negotiation of a more detailed Agreement-in-Principle in the next three to four years.

Everyone recognizes that a lot of hard work remains before these negotiations are concluded and that many challenges still lie ahead, but there is no doubt that it felt good to celebrate!

See page 2 for more information about these agreements and photos of the signing ceremonies.

The purpose of our newsletter is to keep you informed on the progress of land and self-government negotiations in the Northwest Territories, and to provide some answers to frequently asked questions. We also feature the people and communities involved in negotiations, celebrate milestones, and announce upcoming events. On behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), we hope you will find our newsletter informative and easy to read.

In this issue...

Threads of History: Gwich'in seamstresses bring ancient craft to life

A time to celebrate and to look forward: Making history in the NWT

Gwich'in and Inuvialuit: Returning decision-making to the Beaufort-Delta

The Negotiation Process

Deh Cho: Interim agreements balance economic development with land protection

Just Plain Fun

Our Vision

You Were Asking...

On the Web

Got something to tell us?

Gwich'in and Inuvialuit: Returning decision-making to the Beaufort-Delta

April 16, 2003 – Inuvik

A flag procession opened the ceremony in Inuvik. Dignitaries were escorted to the stage by Gwich'in and Inuvialuit youth and Elders carrying the flags of the four negotiating Parties.

Minister Nault practices his jigging with one of the Last Three Rockers, a traditional Gwich'in dance troupe that opened the signing ceremony. The Minister also picked up a few new dance steps later on from the Inuvialuit dancers who closed the ceremony.

Media interest in the historic signing of the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-government AIP was high. Shown here are Fred Carmichael, Nellie Cournoyea and Premier Kakfwi taking questions after the signing.

What happened?

The Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) for the Beaufort-Delta Region was signed by Fred Carmichael, President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Nellie Cournoyea, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Robert D. Nault, federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and Stephen Kakfwi, Premier of the Northwest Territories.

"With the fulfillment of this agreement, the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in will once again become self-governing people, and will be able to protect, in law, those things that make us unique – our languages and our cultures. But it's about more than just protecting language and culture. It's about reflecting our values and traditional ways of doing things into government decision-making." – Nellie Cournoyea, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

What does it mean?

This AIP establishes a basis for a Final Self-Government Agreement that will give greater decision-making powers to the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit, and to all residents of the Beaufort-Delta Region. It describes a new government system for the region that would include a public Regional Government, a Gwich'in Government, an Inuvialuit Government and public community governments.

Each government would have its own set of clearly defined responsibilities, but would also work with the other governments. Guaranteed representation for Gwich'in and Inuvialuit on public governments would allow the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit to play an important role in charting the future direction of the region. In addition, through the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit governments, they would have a greater ability to preserve and promote their languages and cultures.

"It was not possible for many of us to envision how [two peoples] scattered across such a huge area, so diverse culturally, geographically, politically, could come together to make an agreement on how to govern and yet today, we see it was very possible." – Premier Stephen Kakfwi

The AIP provides for law-making and administrative powers. It contains 29 chapters, covering subjects such as culture and language, education, out-of-school care, local government operations, training, health care, income support, child and family services and adoption.

Negotiations will now focus on reaching a Final Self-Government Agreement. Work is also underway in Beaufort-Delta communities to prepare for self-government. Over the past year, Beaufort-Delta residents have been participating in community workshops on community constitution development, priorities, planning, organizational development and finance.

"This moment signifies so much of who the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit are – how they have lived and indeed, how they have thrived and managed on their lands for so many centuries, meeting different phases of their history and the changes with such endurance and courage and steadfast determination. This is a culmination of who you are as a people, a success story of monumental proportions." – MP Ethel Blondin-Andrew

What if I want to know more?

Visit the Beaufort-Delta Self-Government Office website at www.selfgov.org or contact Susan Beaumont at (867) 669-2578.

Land and self-government negotiations usually involve three groups, often referred to as "parties": the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and one or more Aboriginal groups. Each negotiation is unique, and reflects the needs, desires and processes of the parties at the table. However, most negotiations involve a series of distinct steps, as follows.

Submission of claim: The Aboriginal group prepares a description of its claim that identifies the general geographic area of its traditional territory.

Acceptance of claim: The Government of Canada reviews the claim and informs the Aboriginal group whether or not it is prepared to open negotiations. If the answer is no, reasons are provided in writing. If the answer is yes, the process proceeds to the next step.

Framework Agreement: At the first stage of negotiation, the parties agree on what issues will be discussed and how they will be discussed. They also agree on time lines for reaching an Agreement-in-Principle.

Interim Measures Agreement: Early in negotiations, the parties establish temporary measures that will apply in the territory that is subject to negotiations while the

Deh Cho:
Interim agreements balance economic development with land protection

April 17, 2003 – Fort Providence

Before beginning the signing ceremony, community members and guests offered thanks by feeding the fire at the school near the Deh Gah school in Fort Providence. Shown here are Elder Willie Mercredi and Greg Nitah.

What happened?

The Grand Chief of the Deh Cho First Nations, Michael Nadli, and the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Robert D. Nault, signed an Interim Resource Development Agreement and confirmed the interim land withdrawals that will soon be in effect for the Deh Cho territory.

"Our treaty relationship is becoming closer and more trusting, something that we can all be very proud of." – Minister Nault at the signing of the Interim Resource Development Agreement

What does it mean?

These interim agreements provide clear guidance on where and how development can proceed in the Deh Cho territory and give the Deh Cho First Nations a unique opportunity to benefit from resource royalties while they negotiate towards a final agreement.

Interim Resource Development Agreement: The Government of Canada will set aside an amount equal to 12.25% of the first $2 million it collects in resource royalties from the Mackenzie Valley each year and 2.45% of any additional royalties. The Deh Cho will be able to access up to half that money for economic development right away and the rest will be paid out at final agreement. The Government of Canada and the Deh Cho First Nations also commit to initiating a cycle for issuing oil and gas exploration licences within one year and every two years thereafter in accordance with existing oil and gas legislation and regulations). Requirements for community consultation and impact benefit agreements for major mining projects are also included in the agreement.

"We have conducted our negotiations in good faith in partnership with governments. We have achieved these unprecedented agreements with creativity, innovation and flexibility, and based on our common ground principles that we developed in 1999."
– *Deh Cho Grand Chief Michael Nadli*

Deh Cho Interim Land Withdrawal: An arrangement that will protect approximately 70,000 km², or 34% of the Deh Cho territory from new development for a period of five years, while leaving other lands open for development in accordance with existing legislation, regulations and agreements. Some of the withdrawn areas will be off limits to all types of new development (surface and sub-surface withdrawal), while other areas will be open to surface development only (e.g. forestry). Existing interests such as leases and registered mineral claims will not be affected. People will still be able to access and travel across withdrawn lands.

With these interim measures in place, the negotiations will now focus on reaching a general Agreement-in-Principle.

"I can't help but think of the Elders that are no longer here with us... There have been a lot of people who have worked to get us to where we are at this point... There have been a lot of leaders who have striven, that have talked about the future."
– Senator Nick Sibbeston

What if I want to know more?

Visit Canada's new website on the Deh Cho Process at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/dehcho or contact Roxane Poulin at (867) 669-2580.

Students of the Deh Gah school in Fort Providence entertain the crowd with a hand game demonstration.

Grand Chief Nadli helps Minister Nault try on a jacket made of caribou hide, a gift from the Deh Cho First Nations to commemorate the historic day. The Minister offered the Grand Chief a painting by James Wedzin.

negotiations are taking place. These agreements can include measures such as interim land withdrawals, pre-screening processes for land, water and resource management decisions, and other measures.

Agreement-in-Principle: In this stage, the parties negotiate the issues set out in the Framework Agreement. Reaching an Agreement-in-Principle (commonly called an "AIP") often takes longer than any other stage in the negotiation process. The AIP should contain all the major elements of the eventual Final Agreement.

Final Agreement: A Final Agreement is the outcome of successful land claim and self-government negotiations. It details agreements reached between the Aboriginal group, the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories on all issues at hand, including resources, self-government, financial benefits, and land ownership. A Final Agreement must be ratified by all parties.

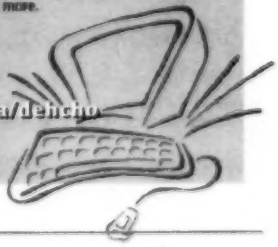
Implementation: A process is put in place to ensure that what the parties agreed to, is, in fact, done. The implementation plan is monitored and managed by a tripartite committee.

Do you have questions about the Deh Cho Process?

To read negotiation documents for yourself, or keep up with the latest developments, visit the Government of Canada's new Deh Cho Process website. You'll find background information, documents, maps, photos and much more.

Check it out at:

WWW.ainc-inac.gc.ca/dehcho



Just Plain Fun

Land and self-government negotiations are serious stuff, but there is always room for a little fun. That's what this section of *Plain Talk* is all about. This is where you get to have some fun and test your knowledge.

Unscramble the letters on the right to find the answer to the question on the left. If you are having trouble, you can go back to the stories, photos and quizzes in this edition of *Plain Talk* because the answers are somewhere in these four pages. Find out how you did by checking the answers provided under the puzzle... but no, not to peek!

1. Person who sews clothing
2. Place where the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle was signed
3. Type of berry used to decorate the outfit on page 2
4. Federal Minister who recently visited the NWT
5. Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
6. Word used for some agreements that means "temporary"
7. A place where a first feeding ceremony might take place
8. One of the chapters in the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Self-Government deals with this subject
9. Place where the Interim Resource Development was signed
10. An agreement signed at the start of negotiations that says what issues will be discussed and how
11. After the final agreement, this happens to make sure what the parties agreed to is done
12. Senator who attended the ceremony in Fort Providence
13. Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic
14. A person from whom we are descended

There are more facts, games and activities on DIAND's Youth Buzz
http://nwt.inac.gc.ca/youthbuzz

ANSWERS

You were asking...

Q How do land and self-government negotiations contribute to the economy?

A Businesses prefer to invest where the future is certain. Land and self-government negotiations seek to clarify who owns and has rights to land and resources and create certainty. Once agreements are in place, businesses and investors will know who owns or may use land and resources in that area, and may be more willing to invest in the North. Defined, long-lasting agreements about legal rights to land and resources are in the interest of both Aboriginal and nonAboriginal northerners.

Do you have a questions about land or self-government negotiations in the NWT? We'd be happy to provide an answer. Contact the address listed below.

OUR VISION

The NWT region of DIAND is a respected partner in a strong and healthy Northwest Territories.

We strive for:

- respectful, effective relationships with Aboriginal people;
- creating and enhancing opportunities for all Northerners;
- responsible resource development in healthy ecosystems;
- northern control over northern resources;
- responsive and accountable northern government as partners; and
- national initiatives that reflect the interests of all Northerners.

On the web

Visit the following for more information:

Government of Canada programs and services:
Government of Canada issues page:
www.gc.ca

Various claims agreements:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/index_e.html

***Plain Talk* on the web:**
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html

Here's who to contact:

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Published under the authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Ottawa, 2003. 1-800-567-9604. TTY only 1-866-553-0554

Print version:
QS-Y137-002-EE-A1 ISSN 1708-0002
Electronic version: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca
http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html
QS-Y137-002-EE-A1 ISSN 1708-0010

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Cette publication peut aussi être obtenue en français sous le titre: Frans parler

Plain Talk on Land and Self-government is produced by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the NWT to help northerners understand these concepts, how they work, and what they mean in our day-to-day lives. It is not a legal document.